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ABSTRACT

This report is based on the findings of a Special Issues Analysis Center (SIAC) focus group on active learning instructional models for limited English proficiency (LEP) students which convened in June 1993. The report is aimed at supplying answers for teachers uncertain about what to do when confronted with English language learners (ELL) in their classrooms. The guide offers perspectives, strategies, and suggestions to help teachers improve ELL students' English skills while at the same time including them in all the content area instruction contained in the school curriculum. In sequence, the guide: (1) discusses and defines ELL students; (2) offers insights on understanding cultural differences; and (3) gives advice on understanding second language learning. The guide also offers such ideas about instruction in the active learning classroom as how to: maximize opportunities for language use; secure participation in meaningful and challenging tasks; support students' own efforts at understanding; and utilize cultural diversity. (Contains 8 references.) (LR)

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WORKING WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRATEGIES FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

A. M. ZEHLER

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Working with English Language Learners: Strategies for Elementary and Middle School Teachers

At the beginning of this school year, you may have discovered that there were one or more students in your class who did not grow up speaking English. They were raised in another country, or perhaps even in the United States, but where another language was primarily spoken at home. These students, who may not speak English at all or, at least, do not speak, understand, and write English with the same facility as their classmates, are commonly referred to as "limited English proficient" (LEP) or "English language learner" (ELL) students. If, in the past, you taught only native English-speaking students but now have some ELL students in your classroom, then you have joined a growing number of teachers who can no longer take for granted that all students speak English and share a common "American" cultural outlook.

Your initial reaction may be, "What do I do?" You may be wondering how to handle the tasks of helping these students learn basic English language skills while completing your already packed list of objectives for the class as a whole. The purpose of this guide is to try to answer the question, "What do I do?" It offers perspectives, strategies, and suggestions to help you work with ELL students to improve their English while at the same time including them in content-area instruction in mathematics, science, social studies, and the other subjects that make up the school curriculum. Much of what is suggested is related to working within an active learning instructional model. You will find that working with your ELL students can provide a resource to your classroom, aid the learning process for all of your students, and improve language skills and cross-cultural understanding for the entire class.

The English language learners in your classroom may be very different in their background, skills, and past experience from the other students you are teaching. Some may have

come to the U.S. from a country in which they attended school regularly and will bring with them literacy skills and content knowledge, although in another language. Other students may come with a history of survival within a war-torn country where there was no opportunity for consistent —or any— schooling. There will be differences in home background as well. Many will belong to very low-income families; the parents of some of these, however, may have been highly educated in their own country, and may have once held professional positions. The resources and the needs that the individual students bring are therefore often likely to be very different.

The first step in answering the question "What do I do?", then, is to learn the answer to another question: "Who are they?" As for any of your students, understanding the skills, needs, resources the students bring will help you to plan instructional goals and to build a classroom environment that will enhance learning for all of your students.

WHO ARE THEY?

Although ELL students come from diverse backgrounds, they have several common needs. Certainly, they need to build their oral English skills. They also need to acquire reading and writing skills in English. And they must attempt to maintain a learning continuum in the content areas (e.g., mathematics, science, and social studies). Some ELL students will have other needs that will make the task of learning much more difficult. Some come from countries where schooling is very different. Some may have large gaps in their schooling while others may not have had *any* formal schooling and may lack important native language literacy skills that one would normally expect for students of their age.

ELL students are also diverse in their economic backgrounds. Some may come from backgrounds where there are financial difficulties or health problems. These students may need support from health and social service agencies. Or, they may simply need your understanding about some of the special circumstances that they face. It may be that both their parents work long hours and cannot help with homework, or they may be required to babysit brothers and sisters until late each evening, making it difficult to complete all of the assigned homework.

ELL students' diverse backgrounds can offer many resources for the entire classroom

The important point to remember is that any individual student presents a profile of aptitudes and abilities in subject areas and skills, and that this is true for students who are learning English as much as for native English speakers. However, the student who is learning English will have more trouble in expressing his or her level of understanding and capabilities in the second language, English.

All children bring unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the classroom. ELL students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can offer many resources for the entire classroom including:

Information—about other countries and their cultures, customs, and resources;
New perspectives—about the world, about society, about beliefs; and
Opportunities—for exposure to other languages, for sharing ways of thinking and doing things that might otherwise be taken for granted.

When the information, perspectives, and opportunities offered by the presence of students from other language and cultural backgrounds are used as a resource for instruction, the whole class benefits. Students build awareness of other points of view and other ways of understanding and, consequently, come to learn more about themselves.

As a classroom teacher, you can develop approaches and practices for working with ELL students that will allow you to include them in instruction with English speaking students. Through your experience, you are able to work with students who differ in levels of ability, in areas of strength, and in special skills or aptitudes. English language learners bring to the classroom new areas of differences, but your experience in working with diversity among English speaking students will apply to these students as well. An important first step, however, is to understand the differences that you will observe.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Differences in language and culture are often subtle but affect students' classroom participation in several ways. Understanding these will help you to respond in ways that will help both ELLs and other students to learn.

Cultural differences can mean different rules for classroom behavior

Students from other cultures can have different views of how to be a student or to "do schooling." For example, though you may want students to participate in class by asking questions and joining in discussions, some students may not feel comfortable participating because, in their culture, it is considered disrespectful to ask questions of a teacher.

Cultural differences can affect students' understanding of content

New knowledge is built on the basis of what is already known by an individual. For example, in the area of reading, research points out that it is a constructive process that involves building meaning not only from the words on the page but also from one's related background knowledge. Often, school texts assume a common experience that, in fact, is *not* shared by all students: ELLs may not fully understand these texts and, consequently, will be less likely to remember the content material. Students whose experience is not in the mainstream, therefore, will often need additional explanation and examples to draw the connection between new material and their existing knowledge bases.

Cultural differences can affect interactions with others

Culturally different ways of showing interest, respect, appreciation can be misinterpreted. For example, if a student does not look at the teacher when the teacher is speaking, it may be interpreted as the student's lack of attention or as a show of disrespect. However, in the student's culture the expectation may be just the opposite, that is, to show respect a student

should not look directly at the teacher. The way in which praise is given can also be different. For some cultural groups, praise to an individual student is not given publically. Instead, a quiet word of praise to the student is more appropriate. Teachers need to be sensitive to student reactions and try to respect these, while also helping students to understand the cultural differences too.

UNDERSTANDING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Research has shown that many commonly held "folklore" beliefs about children and language learning are, in fact, inaccurate. The following points about second language learning should be helpful for a teacher in understanding more about ELL students' efforts to learn English.

It is not simple or easy for children to learn a second language

Learning a second language is a big task for anyone. After all, while learning a first language is a process that involves much of a young child's day, ELLs must work even harder to acquire a second language. For children as for adults, it can be difficult emotionally to take the step into a new language and culture. Children, perhaps even more than adults, can be shy and embarrassed around others when trying out beginning language skills.

Young children need time to learn a new language

Despite the common view that children have special abilities for learning language, research shows that, in fact, older children and adults have the ability to learn the vocabulary and grammar of a new language faster than younger children. This is because older children and adults have already developed learning strategies and, through learning their primary language, have formed an explicit understanding of language rules and structures that can help them in learning a second language. Yet, because they appear proficient with smaller vocabulary and simple phrases and quickly gain native-like pronunciation, young children are often perceived to develop second language proficiency quickly.

Fluency on the playground does not necessarily mean proficiency in the classroom

Fluency on the playground does not necessarily mean proficiency in the classroom

Often, we may hear a student conversing easily in English on the playground with other students. This, however, does *not* mean that s/he has become fluent in English; although social conversational skills are important, they are not sufficient for classroom-based academic learning. Yet, it is easy to overlook the fact that academic language can still be challenging and adversely affect the student's academic performance even though s/he is fluent in everyday conversations. In fact, a child who is fluent in English on the playground is likely to require four to six years to acquire the level of proficiency needed for successful academic learning (Collier 1989).

Children learn a second language in different ways

There are many similarities in how a second language is learned, but there are also differences based on individual student characteristics and language background. For example, more outgoing children may begin to imitate phrases and expressions very early and try them without worrying about making mistakes. Other children, however, may not use their new language for some time. Instead, they observe quietly until they are sure of what they should say. What may be difficult for teachers to remember is that the outgoing student may be less proficient than s/he appears, and that the quiet student may actually be much more proficient than s/he seems. Both will eventually learn to speak fluently.

Different patterns in learning a second language (e.g., error patterns) may also occur based on the learner's first language. For example, a student whose first language does not mark definite and indefinite references may have a hard time acquiring the use of English articles.

Silence is sometimes needed

Students may be silent at times as they learn to speak a second language. Some learners need to focus more on listening than speaking, especially during the early stages of learning a new language. For others, there may be a need to briefly "tune out" at points in the course of a day to "recharge" from the constant effort of listening and speaking in a new language.

Silence may also occur in extended pauses before a student answers a question. Allow students additional time to collect their thoughts and structure their answer. Moving too quickly to the next student discourages efforts to respond; in contrast, recognizing that the student needs more time to answer lets the student know that you are interested in listening.

Errors can indicate progress

As with first language acquisition, errors can actually have a positive meaning. They often appear when a learner is trying out new grammatical structures. When the focus is on communicating, direct correction of errors can hinder students' efforts and discourage further attempts to express ideas with the language skills they have available. Rather than correct errors directly, a teacher can continue the dialogue by restating what the student has said to model the correct form.

Instructional tasks should involve students as active participants.

INSTRUCTION IN THE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

Valuing the diverse resources that ELL students bring to the classroom and being sensitive to their unique needs can serve to build an instructional environment that can benefit all students. Current education research and reform focus on increasing student participation in instruction and on basing instruction on the real-life needs of students. An active learning instructional model for ELL students includes elements that address the special language-related needs and cultural differences of stu-

dents who are learning English. There are five key instructional elements to active learning for ELL students.

The classroom should be predictable and accepting of all students. All students are able to focus on and enjoy learning more when the school and classroom make them feel safe—comfortable with themselves and with their surroundings. Teachers can increase comfort levels through structured classroom rules and activity patterns, explicit expectations, and genuine care and concern for each student.

Instructional activities should maximize opportunities for language use. Opportunities for substantive, sustained dialogue are critical to challenging students' abilities to communicate ideas, formulate questions, and use language for higher order thinking. Each student, at his or her own level of proficiency, should have opportunities to communicate meaningfully in this way.

Instructional tasks should involve students as active participants. Students contribute and learn more effectively when they are able to play a role in structuring their own learning, when tasks are oriented toward discovery of concepts and answers to questions, and when the content is both meaningful and challenging.

Instructional interactions should provide support for student understanding. Teachers should ensure that students understand the concepts and materials being presented. For ELL students this includes providing support for the students' understanding of instruction presented in English.

Instructional content should utilize student diversity. Incorporating diversity into the classroom provides ELL students with social support, offers all students opportunities to recognize and validate different cultural perspectives, and provides all students information on other cultures and exposure to other languages. Also, examples and information relevant to ELL students' backgrounds assist them in understanding content.

Create an accepting and predictable environment

CREATE AN ACCEPTING AND PREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENT

A supportive environment is built by the teacher on several grounds. There is acceptance, interest, and understanding of different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and customs. Explicit information on what is expected of students is provided and is reinforced through clearly structured daily patterns and class activities. These provide important social and practical bases for students, especially ELL students. When students are freed of the need to interpret expectations and figure out task structures, they can concentrate on and take risks in learning.

Provide a clear acceptance of each student

Treat ELLs as individuals and as equal members of the class. Recognize and be aware of cultural differences; however, don't assume that, because a student comes from a particular language

or cultural group, s/he shares all the beliefs or customs of that group. Also, understand that singling out students as spokespersons for a culture may make them uncomfortable.

Show acceptance by making the environment more accessible to ELL students. One way is to place signs in the student's language and in English to identify areas in the classroom (e.g., "class library," "science materials," "quiet work center") and around the building (e.g., "office," "cafeteria"). Such multilingual signs make families as well as students feel more welcome in the school.

Make classroom activities structured and predictable

Give students a clear understanding of how tasks proceed. For example, if students are to work in cooperative groups, begin by describing how they are to work together. Make lists of student roles and group responsibilities, and explain and discuss these. Keep the basic structure for cooperative group work consistent. In this way, students will know what is expected of them, even though the specific content or tasks will change. Ensure that students have a clear sense of their daily schedules, even if they vary from day to day. Students will be less able to focus on instruction when they are concerned about where they should be or what they should be doing. When a change in schedule is needed, give as much advance notice as possible. Do not rely on simply telling students; add other ways of letting students know about the change, such as correcting a posted schedule, or crossing off the usual activity and adding in the new activity.

Let students know what is expected of them

For all students, a clear, shared understanding of the rules for participating in the class, acceptable behavior during and after completing specific class activities, and general expectations for student behavior are important. For ELL students who are often struggling with cultural differences as well as language, it is even more important to:

explain or demonstrate expectations about classroom rules and behaviors (e.g., provide specific information on how to gain the teacher's attention, how use of a particular activity center is shared); and

assist students whose cultural definitions of being a student differ from class expectations (e.g., describe the types of activities that the class will do, how to ask questions within these different activities, or when and how it is acceptable to interrupt the teacher or to move about the classroom).

Have high expectations for all students

An environment in which students feel comfortable and accepted is also one where all students feel that their participation is valued and that it is likely to lead to success. Positive, high expectations for performance are important for ELL students within any classroom. They, as much as English proficient students, need to develop content knowledge and the higher order thinking skills that will be required of them as they progress into further training or employment. There must be opportunities provided for ELL students to work with

challenging tasks. ELL students should be included, for example, in cooperative working groups and given responsibilities that allow them to contribute to the group goal.

High expectations for ELL students are important not only within the classroom but within the school. The context of the school must be one in which all students are viewed as highly capable and able to take on challenging work successfully.

MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE USE

Language is really central to learning for all students, ELLs and native English speakers alike. Through experience in trying to express ideas, formulate questions, and explain solutions, students' use of language supports their development of higher order thinking skills. The following points are important ways to maximize language use.

Ask questions that require new or extended responses

The teacher's questions should elicit new knowledge, new responses, and thoughtful efforts from students. They should require answers that go beyond a single word or predictable patterns. Students can be asked to expand on their answers by giving reasons why they believe a particular response is correct, by explaining how they arrived at a particular conclusion, or by expanding upon a particular response by creating a logical follow-on statement.

Create opportunities for sustained dialogue and substantive language use

It is often hard to give many students the opportunities needed for meaningful, sustained dialogue within a teacher-centered instructional activity. To maximize opportunities for students to use language, teachers can plan to include other ways of organizing learning activities. For example, in cooperative learning groups students use language together to accomplish academic tasks. In reciprocal teaching models, each student/group is responsible for completing then sharing/teaching one portion of a given task.

Students can write in daily journals seen only by themselves and the teacher

Opportunities for maximizing language use and engaging in a sustained dialogue should occur in both written and oral English. Students can write in daily journals, seen by only themselves and the teacher. This type of writing should be encouraged for students at all levels. Some ELL students may be too embarrassed to write at first; they may be afraid of not writing everything correctly. The focus in this type of writing, however, should be on communicating.

Students should be given opportunities to write about what they have observed or learned. Less English proficient ELLs can be paired to work with other, more proficient students or be encouraged to include illustrations when they report their observations. The teacher should also ensure that there are substantive opportunities for students to use oral and written language to define, summarize, and report on activities. Learning takes place often through students' ef-

forts to summarize what they have observed, explain their ideas about a topic to others, and answer questions about their presentations. ELL students' language proficiency may not be fully equal to the task; however, they should be encouraged to present their ideas using the oral, written, and nonlinguistic communication skills they *do* have. This can be supplemented through small group work where students learn from each other as they record observations and prepare oral presentations.

Provide opportunities for language use in multiple settings

Opportunities for meaningful language use should be provided in a variety of situations: small groups, with a variety of groupings (i.e., in terms of English proficiency); peer-peer dyads (again, with a variety of groupings); and teacher-student dyads. Each situation will place its own demands on students and expose them to varied types of language use.

The physical layout of the room should be structured to support flexible interaction among students. There can be activity areas where students can meet in small groups or the teacher can meet with a student, or the furniture in the room can be arranged and rearranged to match the needs of an activity.

Focus on communication

When the focus is on communicating or discussing ideas, specific error correction should be given a minor role. This does not mean that errors are never corrected; it means that this should be done as a specific editing step, apart from the actual production of the written piece. Similarly, in oral language use, constant, insistent correction of errors will discourage ELLs from using language to communicate. Indirect modeling of a corrected form in the context of a response is preferable to direct correction.

PROVIDE FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN MEANINGFUL AND CHALLENGING TASKS

Many teachers now plan for instruction of both ELL and English proficient students as they structure their classroom activities. With this type of diversity in the class, some shifts in approach are needed. However, the types of adaptations that can be helpful to ELL students are also those that recent research and reform efforts indicate are effective for all students.

For example, many descriptions of instructional innovation focus on increasing student participation in ways that result in students asking questions and constructing knowledge, through a process of discovery to arrive at new information that is meaningful and that expands students knowledge.

Give students responsibility for their own learning.

An important goal is to create or increase the level of "authentic" (Newmann and Wehlage, 1993) in-

struction, i.e., instruction that results in learning that is relevant and meaningful beyond success in the classroom task alone.

Give students responsibility for their own learning

In active participation, students assist the teacher in defining the goals of instruction and identifying specific content to be examined or questions to be addressed. Students also play active roles in developing the knowledge that is to be learned (e.g., students observe and report on what they have observed, write to organizations for needed information, and assist each other in interpreting and summarizing information). Active participation also involves some shifting of roles and responsibilities; teachers become less directive and more facilitative, while students assume increasing responsibility.

ELL students need to participate as much as other students. Their participation can be at a level that is less demanding linguistically, but still requires higher order thinking skills and allows them to demonstrate or provide information in nonlinguistic ways. For example, using limited written text, an ELL student with very little oral or written proficiency in English can create a pictorial record of what was observed in a science class, noting important differences from one event to the next.

Develop the use of a discovery process

When students take an active role in constructing new knowledge, they use what they already know to identify questions and seek new answers. A discovery process is one in which students participate in defining the questions to be asked, develop hypotheses about the answers, work together to define ways to obtain the information they need to test their hypotheses, gather information, and summarize and interpret their findings. Through these steps, students learn new content in a way that allows them to build ownership of what they are learning. They are also learning how to learn.

Include the use of cooperative student efforts

Emphasize the social nature of learning

Recent findings about how people learn emphasize the social nature of learning. Many successful examples of classroom innovation with ELL students show the value of using cooperative working groups composed of heterogenous groups of students, including students at different levels of ability. The composition of groups should be carefully considered and should be flexible so that students experience working with different individuals. Mixing ELL and English proficient students within groups promotes opportunities to hear and use English within a meaningful, goal-directed context.

Learning to work in cooperative groups requires practice and guidance for the students. Formal roles should be assigned to each member of a group (e.g.,

note-taker, reporter, group discussion leader), and these roles should be rotated. At older grades, as students identify different tasks to be accomplished by a group, students might define and assign their own responsibilities. In all cases, the use of group work requires attention to ensure that each individual has opportunities and responsibilities in contributing to the development of the overall product.

Teachers need to be sensitive to the fact that some cultural groups prefer independent rather than cooperative learning structures and activities. Teachers may want to consider adjusting the balance of learning activities for students to accommodate such differences and to provide more support, thereby allowing students to gradually become more comfortable in these activities.

Make learning relevant to the students' experience

Content matter is more meaningful for students when it relates to their background and experience. Furthermore, new knowledge is best learned and retained when it can be linked to existing "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al. 1990) so new content should be introduced through its relationship to an already understood concept. For example, a discussion of food cycles can begin with a discussion of foods commonly found in students' homes and communities.

It is important that the learning experience regularly draws links between home, the community, and the classroom because this serves to contextualize and make content meaningful for students. An active learning instructional approach ultimately seeks to develop in students a view of themselves as learners in all aspects of their lives, not only in the classroom. Students should see opportunities and resources for learning outside of the classroom as well. Whenever possible, the resources of the home and community should be used. For example, when a class is learning about structure, a parent who is a carpenter can be called upon to explain how the use of different materials can affect the design and strength of a structure (taking into account function, strength, flexibility, and so on).

Use thematic integration of content across subject areas

Learning is also made more meaningful when it is contextualized within a broader topic. Mathematics, social studies, and science can all become interrelated through their common reference to the same theme or topic of interest. In this way different perspectives on the topic are developed through linkages across different types of learning activities.

Build in-depth investigation of content

Instruction is more challenging and engaging when it provides in-depth examination of fewer topics rather than more limited coverage of a broader range of topics. Furthermore, a comprehensive exploration of one or more content areas promotes understanding and helps students retain what they learn. Also, integrated, thematic curricula that address the same topic across different content areas provide students opportunities to explore a given subject in greater depth.

Design activities that promote higher order thinking skills

Classroom tasks should challenge students by requiring them to develop and utilize higher order skills. Higher order thinking activities require students to use what they know to generate new information (e.g., to solve problems, integrate information, or compare and contrast). Higher order skills are utilized, for example, when students are asked to review a folktale from one country that they have just read, to identify another folktale from their own background that they think makes a similar point, and to explain the similarities and differences. This is in contrast to lower order thinking skills such as rote repetition of responses or memorization of facts.

PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR UNDERSTANDING

Students need opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning—to seek out information and formulate answers. This is what the active learning instructional model provides. However, essential to the process is the support provided by the teacher. As a partner in students' investigations of new content, the teacher should:

Guide and facilitate students' efforts

The teacher's input as a facilitator and guide to students should be carried out in a variety of ways, such as:

asking open-ended questions that invite comparison and contrast, and prompt students to integrate what they have observed, draw conclusions, or state hypotheses;

assisting students in identifying needed resources, including setting up linkages with resources in the local community (e.g., local experts who could visit, field trips to organizations, and so on);

structuring learning activities that require students to work cooperatively and modeling the different group member roles.

encouraging students to discuss concepts they are learning, to share their thoughts, and to express further questions that they would like to tackle;

establishing long-term dialogues with students about the work they are doing, either in regular teacher/student conferences or dialogue journals; and

setting up opportunities for students to demonstrate or exhibit their work to other classes in the school as a means of prompting further dialogue outside of the classroom.

Monitor and adapt speech to ELL students

In using English with ELL students, the teacher should also listen carefully to his/her own language use and try to adapt it to meet the students' level of understanding of English. For example, the following can help a student to gain a better understanding of what is being said:

restate complex sentences as a sequence of simple sentences;

avoid or explain use of idiomatic expressions;

restate at a slower rate when needed, but make sure that the pace is not so slow that normal intonation and stress patterns become distorted;

pause often to allow students to process what they hear;

provide specific explanations of key words and special or technical vocabulary, using examples and nonlinguistic props when possible; use everyday language; and
provide explanations for the indirect use of language (i.e., indirect management strategies may need to be explained. For example, an ELL student may understand the statement, "I like the way Mary is sitting" merely as a simple statement rather than as a referenced example of good behavior).

Provide additional support for understanding English

ELL students will need additional support to assist them in understanding the instruction provided in English. This support will be helpful, however, to all students in the class. The teacher should provide nonlinguistic examples that help to explain or clarify the content that is presented. Some suggestions are:

bring in objects, photographs, or other materials as examples;
use visual organizers and graphics to organize, illustrate, and point out key points;
use demonstrations or role playing to illustrate a concept;
provide notes (perhaps an outline of the lesson) to students for their later review of what was presented; and
allow time for students to discuss what they learn and generate questions in areas that require clarification. Have other students try to answer the questions that arise.

It will be important for the teacher to monitor students' work closely to be able to provide assistance when needed. Do not rely exclusively on oral responses or spoken language when assessing how well ELL students have learned specific content. Other forms of assessment can be based on written work, demonstrations, or special projects.

Work with peers

Students can also be supported through working with peers. This should entail working with a variety of other students, both ELLs and English speakers, at different types of activities. In some activities, for example, it may be advantageous to mix ELLs with English proficient peers in a cooperative group effort (projects that have a lot of hands-on involvement often work well in this setting). This opportunity to work with proficient English speakers can be motivating for ELL students, while also providing meaningful, goal-directed opportunities for them to use English. ELL students will also benefit from one-on-one work with English proficient students, especially ones who have shown interest in or a special ability for working in tandem with students who are not fully proficient in English.

Larger groups that include multiple ELL and English proficient students also offer certain advantages. For example, two ELL students from the same language group can work together in their native language to complete a project, then practice presenting their work in English to other students in the group. A variation is to pair each ELL with a "buddy" who speaks the same native language but is more proficient in English. Another variation is to pair ELLs with older, English proficient students (perhaps high school or college students) who serve as tutors.

Use native language

Use of the native language is helpful to the ELL student in learning content area material. If the teacher or the aide in the classroom speaks the native language of the ELL student, then the student's language can be used to further explain or expand upon what is being presented. If students are literate in their native language, then, where available, it is helpful to provide materials written in the native language of the ELL students that deal with topics related to those being discussed in class.

UTILIZE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

ELL students bring to the classroom first hand knowledge of the customs, daily lives, thoughts, and feelings of people in other countries. Through sharing these resources, all students can gain.

Make sharing mutual

When students from other cultures offer information on their country's customs, English proficient students can describe American customs or, perhaps, research and report on customs of the countries from which their families originated. Also, sharing cultural insights should be placed in context, and related to other themes. In this way, there is a rationale and value placed on the sharing of cultures beyond differences alone and students will feel more as contributors and less as being put on the spot. A teacher should be aware, however, that, for some students, being pointed out as an individual is very uncomfortable.

Integrate diversity into content

Ideally, sharing should evolve out of and enrich instructional content; recognition of cultural diversity should be an ongoing theme, rather than a one-week "special." Different holidays and festivals should be recognized, not only those of the cultures represented in class. A unit on folktales in language arts class, for example, can draw on many different sources and, by so doing, encourage students to talk about, act out, or illustrate folktales they are most familiar with. A social studies unit on patterns of politeness can include discussion of differences between situations within a culture (e.g., what is acceptable to say when talking with a fellow student versus a principal or teacher) and differences between cultures. Looking at and talking about these kinds of patterns can help all the students in the class understand more about behaviors they might observe in others, as well as develop a greater awareness about their own cultures. No teacher can become an encyclopedia of practices, expectations, or beliefs; however, every teacher should develop an attitude of interest and learning about cultural differences.

Cultural diversity should be an ongoing theme rather than a one week "special."

WORK TOGETHER WITH OTHERS

The attempt to restructure activities in your classroom and to deal with new forms of diversity is a challenging one. It is not one that a teacher needs to face alone.

Combine your expertise with that of other teachers

A significant body of recent research has focused on the value of teachers combining their professional expertise and sharing their experiences with one another. Teachers can offer important support to each other by serving as sounding boards for successes and failures, as additional sources of suggestions for resolving problem situations, and as resources to each other in sharing ideas, materials, and successful practices. Also, the more teachers who work with the same students share information, the more consistent and effective their students' overall instructional experience will be. Teachers should take steps to:

collaborate and confer with the ESL/bilingual specialist in the school;
collaborate with other content area teachers who work with the same ELL students to share resources, ideas, and information about students' work;
share ideas and experiences with teachers who are interested in trying out more active instructional activities with their students, whether ELL or English proficient; and
involve the principal. Let the principal know what you are doing, explain how you are implementing an active instructional model in your class, and explain the benefits for all students. Ask for support; some of this support should come in tangible ways, such as assistance in scheduling joint planning periods for collaborating teachers.

Build links with the home and the community

Reach beyond the classroom to incorporate experiences that draw on students' homes and communities. Through linkages between their homes, communities, and the classroom, students will come to see learning as integral to all parts of their lives. Bringing in community leaders and parents also builds students' self-esteem, and the support identified through these linkages can provide additional access to community resources. Through these, the different skills and knowledge of community members can be identified and later utilized in the classroom. Inform parents and community members about what is happening in the classroom and in the school and invite them to visit to become aware of what students are doing.

Content teachers, ESL/bilingual specialists, and principals should collaborate and share their professional expertise

Build linkages with other classrooms and support within the school

What happens in one classroom is often not enough. The same active learning model and the levels of expectation and involvement of the ELL student should pervade all classes. For this reason,

ideally, change toward an active learning instructional model should occur within a school rather than within a single classroom. Gaining a principal's support for an active instructional model is key to this. Even if it is only one teacher or two teachers working together to bring about change into their classrooms, the principal's support and recognition of this effort will be important.

YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL AT ONCE

If you are interested in moving toward an active learning instructional model, starting small is okay. Begin by becoming more familiar with your students. Perhaps set up a regular time with each for discussion. Learn about models for cooperative group work and plan to try cooperative work for one specific type of activity on a regular basis. Talk with other teachers and develop ideas together. Step by step you will be able to build an active learning approach that will benefit all students in your classroom.

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